

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2023

Remarks on the Contract Negotiations Between the United Auto Workers and the Big Three Automobile Companies

September 15, 2023

The President. Hey, folks. I'll be very brief. I wanted to talk very briefly about the auto strike.

I'd like to say a few words about the contract negotiations between the United Auto Workers and the Big Three auto companies.

You know, I've been in touch with both parties over—since this began over the last few weeks. And over the last—the past decade, auto companies have seen record profits, including the last few years, because of the extraordinary skill and sacrifices of the UAW workers. But those record profits have not been shared fairly, in my view, with those workers.

Just as the Treasury Department has released a report pointing out that—the most comprehensive report ever, dealing with how unions are good for both union workers and nonunion workers to—and the overall economy.

Unions raise workers' wages, they said—incomes—increase home ownership; increase retirement savings; increase access to critical benefits, like sick leave and childcare; and reduce inequality—all of which strengthen our economy for all workers. That's because unions raise standards across their workplaces and entire industries, pushing up wages and strengthening benefits for everyone.

And that's why strong unions are critical to a growing economy and growing it from the middle out, the bottom up, not the top down. That's especially true as we transition to a clean energy future, which we're in the process of doing. I believe that transition should be fair and a win-win——

[At this point, the President cleared his throat.]

Excuse me—for auto workers and auto companies.

But I also believe the contract agreement must lead to a vibrant, made-in-America future that promotes good, strong, middle class jobs that workers can raise a family on; where the UAW remains at the heart of our economy; and where the Big Three companies continue to lead in innovation, excellence, quality, and leadership.

Last night, after negotiations broke down, the UAW announced a targeted strike at a few Big Three auto plants. Let's be clear: No one wants a strike. Say it again: No one wants a strike. But I respect the workers' right to use their options under the collective bargaining system. And I understand the workers' frustration.

Over generations, auto workers sacrificed so much to keep the industry alive and strong, especially through the economic crisis and the pandemic. Workers deserve a fair share of the benefits they helped create for an enterprise.

I do appreciate that the parties have been working around the clock. I've—and when I first called them at the very first day of the negotiation, I said, "Please stay at the table as long as you can to try to sort—work this out." And the—they've been around the clock, and the companies have made some significant offers.

But I believe they should go further to ensure record corporate profits mean record contracts for the UAW. I'm going to say that again: Record corporate profits—which they have—should be shared by record contracts for the UAW.

And just as we're building an economy of the future, we need labor agreements for the future.

It's my hope that the parties can return to the negotiation table to forge a win-win agreement.

To continue our active engagement, I'm deploying—I'm dispatching two members of my team to Detroit, Acting Labor Secretary Julie Shu [Su; White House correction] and White House Senior Adviser Gene Sperling—both of them have been involved up until now—to offer their full support for the parties in reaching a contract.

The bottom line is that auto workers helped create America's middle class. They deserve a contract that sustains them in the middle class.

So thank you very much. That's all I'm going to say. Thank you.

Q. Mr. President, at what point would you get directly involved in negotiations? Should Hunter get a pardon, Mr. President?

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:14 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : United Auto Workers and Big Three automobile companies, contract negotiations.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Sperling, Eugene B.; Su, Julie A.

Subjects: Acting Secretary of Labor; Automobile industry, strengthening efforts; Childcare, access and affordability; COVID–19 pandemic; Economic improvement; Household income and wages; Labor movement and organized labor; Paid family and sick leave; United Auto Workers, contract negotiations with Big Three automobile companies; White House Senior Adviser.

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